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THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CÆSAR BY SHAKESPEARE.

By D. J. SNIDER.

The Drama represents man in action. It exhibits him in the infinite web of his complications, with influences passing out from him and coming back to him, and thereby portrays in the shortest space and in the most striking manner the relative worth of human deeds. Nor does it rest content with the mere external doings of man; on the contrary, it penetrates his innermost nature, and probes the profoundest depths of his spiritual being. For it unfolds motives, ends, convictions; and, in fact, these subjective elements constitute its most important feature. They form the basis of what is called character, and their true logical subordination is exhibited in the denouement of the piece.

The Drama is the most concrete and therefore the highest of all the forms of Poetry. The Epos is the product of national childhood; it contemplates man in an intellectual infancy which demands the continuous supervision of the Gods. It therefore lays stress upon the Objective, the Universal; not, however, as mediated through the spirit of man, but as an existence standing outside of him and determining his actions. Hence the tinge of Fate which prevails in all Epic Poetry, for the contradiction between Freedom and Necessity is not yet developed by this early consciousness. Still self-determination may and in fact ought to peer through these external forms in a naive, unconscious manner; such is the case with Homer, who often seems to make the Gods his sport. The Epos therefore may be said to be essentially religious, and seeks to unfold if not to justify the ways of Providence to man.

The Lyric Poet, on the contrary, portrays his own emotions, desires, reflections; in fine, the entire content of his own subjectivity. His strain may be one of joy and happiness, but it is most commonly an incessant lamentation about his own injured and unappreciated self, or a stinging censure of the cold, heartless world. He thus falls out with the existing order of things, becomes negative and sceptical, assails and undermines the ancient faith and simple epical feeling.

So old Simonides was accused of impiety. But to mention all the phases of the lyrical form of poetry would be impossible, for it is as varied and boundless as the nature of man, and extends into all periods of civilization. Its general characteristic however is subjective, and it portrays man in reflection.

But in the Drama all this is changed. Man starts up from the repose in which he has been describing and nursing his emotions, and begins to act; that is, he begins to give his subjective nature validity in the objective world. His feelings, passions, hopes, ends, are no longer satisfied with quiet, lyrical description, but must take on the form of reality. Nor again are these ends which he is trying to realize always merely subjective; on the contrary, they represent objective principles of universal validity, as the Right, the Ethical, the State. Hence the Dramatic is the concrete unity of the Epio and Lyric; not a mixture of the two, but an entirely new species. It unites the subjective side of the one with the objective side of the other, by making the objective world inherent in the subject, and thus filling its emptiness and giving it content; and, on the other hand, it gives validity to the subject in the objective world through his own activity. The Drama presents an action like the Epos; but it must abandon the principle of external divine interference, and put in its stead the self-conscious, self-acting individual. Hence no demons, angels, or Gods, are allowed to perform the mediations of the Drama in its highest manifestations; all is human and expressive of human freedom. For there can only be one reason why the Drama is the highest of all the forms of Art: it most adequately represents self-determination—man as a free and hence responsible being. If, therefore, the Epical consciousness is essentially religious and the Lyrical negative and even sceptical, the Dramatic, on the other hand, is Ethical.

But the Ethical is not a single principle, but includes a series of principles which form a regular gradation from the lowest to the highest. Hence it is possible for a lower principle to collide with a higher. It is just this conflict which constitutes the source of all dramatic action. As the science of Ethics, if truly elaborated, would show all these principles,

in their proper relation and subordination, from a theoretical point of view, so the Drama in a practical way, by means of human action, exhibits in victory or defeat, success or failure, the true relation and subordination of these same ethical principles. It calls man before its tribunal, and unfolds to him the consequences of his deeds, not in an abstract form, but in the form of the deed itself.

If we consider the Drama in this light, it is not the trivial, sportive toy which furnishes amusement for an idle hour, but it assumes immense proportions. We shall find that it is only another form of proposing the greatest of problems, a new way that people have of looking at the profoundest questions of human existence. For the Drama is certainly based upon the ethical world, its collisions must rest upon elements inherent in the ethical order of things, and its solutions if true—which is the same as artistic—must be in accordance with this order. Therefore, to judge of the Drama, we have to know something of this ethical world, its contradictions and its harmonies, its principles and the order of their subordination; or, if we do not know these things already, the Drama may be able to give the requisite instruction. And furthermore, since the ethical world is the realization of Reason, we are led through the Drama to ask ourselves the more important question, What is the absolutely Rational?—not as an idle question of speculation, but as the vital fount of action, as the guiding thread of Life ought we to consider such a theme. The Rational in the Drama and the Rational in Thought and Action cannot well be different; indeed the one is only the adumbration of the other. So the Drama in its highest utterances takes up the problem of Life, and solves it in its own peculiar manner. The clash of appetites and passions, the conflict of rights and duties, the alarming hand of Fate reaching over, grasping after all, and, most prominently, the beneficent form of Freedom standing on a heap of broken chains, are there portrayed, the opposing forces reconciled and reduced to one harmonious, well-ordered system. Thus we may learn a practical as well as an æsthetic truth of incalculable value, that the Rational in the Drama is the Rational in Life. By these remarks we hope it may be seen that the Dramatic Art is no mere abstraction apart from or opposed

to the real world — no plaything to amuse those refined and elegant natures who long to fly away from this grovelling sphere to realms ideal, there to bathe in the sunlight of eternal truth; but it clings to earth, and is the most intensely human of all Art. Nor has mankind ever failed to appreciate its significance as furnishing a reflex of the highest endeavors and greatest achievements of the race.

There is one man to whom we all instinctively turn with the certainty of finding a rational basis—Shakespeare. Criticism has worn itself almost threadbare upon him, and we often are sated with the interminable talk about him, the most of which is so unsatisfactory; still we have always to come back to his works as the unfailing source of the highest intellectual and artistic enjoyment. People feel that his is the greatest name in all literature, perhaps in all history. But this is not enough: we must know what is the special form of that greatness. And so the question arises, wherein is Shakespeare the greatest of authors? We cannot say in the perfection of form, for herein others perhaps surpass him; nor in the mastery of language, for this is a knack which may be learned, and moreover means little by itself; nor in the beauty of his images, for they are often confused, incongruous, and far-fetched; not even in characterization, nor in the management of an action, in the strict sense of the term. Great as his excellence in these things, it has been attained sometimes at least by far inferior writers. There can be no doubt in the statement that the unique and all-surpassing greatness of Shakespeare lies in his comprehension of the ethical order of the world. Though this side of his genius has been always most inadequately stated, and commonly has been passed over entirely in the essays of his critics, still men have instinctively felt that his works were the truest literary product of modern times, because they were the most perfect and concrete presentation of realized rationality. Men see in him their highest selves, and hence must take him as their greatest exponent. The contrast in this respect with even the best creations of nearly all other poets is most striking. We read them, we are charmed with the imagery, the thoughts, the rhythmic flow of the verse. But when we come to the end of one of these works we are confused, lost; we

analyze it more closely, and find that the Whole, however beautiful its individual parts, is an ethical chaos. But Shakespeare, in this sphere as elsewhere, is all harmony ; no contradictions cloud his poetical horizon, nor does he ever make the denouement a logical annihilation of the whole play.

To throw out some hints towards a comprehension of this highest side of Shakespeare's genius is our present purpose. To this end we have selected "*Julius Cæsar*," as exhibiting Shakespeare's ethical world in its completest if not in its concretest form. But first it would perhaps be well to enumerate some of the elements of this ethical world. Those most obvious and most commonly recognized are the Individual, Family, and State. These elements have their limits against one another ; hence they fall into conflict, and one must be subordinated to the other. That is, the individual may assert himself against the demands of Family or State, or the Family may come into collision with the State. It is evident that there must be a gradation of rank in these powers ; one must be above another, else strife and confusion can only result. But above all these there is a fourth principle, which has not the taint of finitude which rests upon the others. For even the State, to which every individual must bow and every principle yield, whose absolute supremacy is expressed in the fact that its safety is the highest law, seems notwithstanding to be exposed to the might of the destroying angel. The Past is strown with the wrecks of States ; the empires of the Orient, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, have arisen and passed away : and so we must acknowledge a Power above the State which calls it into being and also puts an end to its existence. What this Power is, we need not now discuss : we only wish to recognize and name it : let us call it the Spirit of World-History ; or, more concisely, the World-Spirit ; or, in the language of religion, God in History. Only let us not imagine that it is some far-off Power wholly external to man, whose arm descends and smites him to the earth without his knowing whence it cometh or whither it goeth.

Furthermore, all these Principles can only be vitalized through the Individual. Taken alone, they are mere abstractions and of no force ; but when a man goes forth armed with them, and makes them the basis of his action, they move the

world. It is only in this way they can collide and form the foundation of a drama. An individual thus becomes the bearer of some grand ethical principle, and can come into conflict with another individual who is fulfilling the same destiny in a different sphere. For instance, a person may assert the right of individual conscience—certainly a valid principle—against the majesty of law which is the command of the State; or, like Antigone, may prefer duty toward Family to obedience to civil authority; or, finally, there may be a still higher collision, that between the defenders of the State on the one hand and the supporters of the World-spirit on the other. Such is the collision between nations struggling for independence and their conquerors, the collision of Carthage with Rome, of the Pole with the Russian, of the Hungarian with the Austrian. We feel for the fallen nation, we may even weep over an heroic people defeated and prostrate, still in the end we are compelled to say: It is just; the World-Spirit, whose right it is to judge the nations, has decided against them.

Now it is just this collision which Shakespeare has presented in "*Julius Cæsar*." For Cæsar is the representative of the World-Spirit; he appears upon the stage of History as the destroyer of his country's liberties, hence the grand conflict of his life was with the State. It is indeed this fact which has caused him to be calumniated by nearly twenty centuries of writers and speakers. But note that Shakespeare does not join in this cry of execration. To him Cæsar's career is not political, but world-historical; not limited to a single state, but having the world as its theatre. To him Cæsar stands at the head of that eternal and infinite movement in whose grasp the nations are playthings. But, on the other hand, let us not forget that this movement was nothing external to Rome; it was the movement of Rome herself; the Roman Constitution was sapped perhaps before the birth of Cæsar. He only carried out the unconscious national will; he saw what Rome needed, and possessed the strength to execute it, and this is his greatness, and in fact the only real political greatness. That one man can overturn the form of government permanently against the will and spirit of a whole people is preposterous. That such was not Shakespeare's view is shown by the termination of the play. The conspira-

tors are overthrown and the supporters of Cæsar are successful. But this will be more fully pointed out hereafter.

The State has also its representatives in this conflict—Cassius and Brutus, more especially the former. They were the bearers of the spirit of the old Roman Constitution, and were strong enough to destroy the individual Cæsar, but by no means the movement which he represented. The thought of Cæsar remained, and Octavius simply steps into his place, conquers, and has peace—shuts the temple of Janus for the first time in generations. That is, Cæsar's revolution is accomplished, and the Roman people acquiesce.

With this explanation, we may now consider some of the incidents of the play. The first scene introduces us to the grand background upon which the whole drama is painted—the Roman people. Shakespeare has most truthfully depicted the populace as fickle and faithless, without any substantial fixity of purpose within itself. Hence we hurry into the next scene to find the element which gives consistency and stability to this mass. Here the two great men of the time appear, like gladiators, each one bent on the destruction of the other. Cæsar has arrived at the summit of his greatness; he is ready to receive the crown and be called king, whose functions indeed he already performs. This fact is to be particularly noted, as it will answer many objections that have been raised against the play. The critics are much troubled because Cæsar does not say or do anything great, and declare that he is inadequately portrayed. But the poet represents him at the consummation of his deeds, and as the founder of a new order of things; greater he could not well be. To be sure, a drama might be written which would exhibit Cæsar at an earlier period of his life, in the bloom of his activity, energy, and military genius. But such a drama could never present the collision which Shakespeare intended, nor in the faintest degree exhibit the ethical ideas which lie at the basis of this "Julius Cæsar." For in the present piece it is absolutely necessary that Cæsar as the representative of the World-Spirit be assailed, and that his assailants perish. Equally devoid of insight is the reproach of another critic, that Cæsar comes upon the stage only to be slain: for the play assumes Cæsar in the plenitude of his power; this is its first presump-

position. The second presupposition is the deep hostility of Cassius to the government of Cæsar. These are the two gladiators who in this second scene leap forth stripped for the fight. Cassius is in ability only inferior to Cæsar, and Cæsar is perfectly aware both of his hatred and of his talents. Cassius is first shown in the play overcoming the scruples of Brutus and alienating him from the party of Cæsar. With what skill does he introduce the subject, with what logical force are all the motives adduced, until Brutus, partly by the most delicate flattery and partly by adroit appeals to his moral nature, is completely won. A further proof of Cassius' ability is that he essayed Brutus first of all, for the name of Brutus was the greatest and most venerable in Rome, going back even to the expulsion of the kings; and Brutus himself was perhaps the most respectable character in Rome, and consequently of the greatest influence among his fellow-citizens. With him, the conspiracy might be a success; without him, it was impossible. In the third scene, we have Cassius working upon an altogether different character. Casca is the desperado of the conspirators, a man possessed of the greatest physical courage, but without an iota of moral courage. He will rush upon an enemy and stab him, but turns deathly pale at a clap of thunder. Whatever is human he is ready to meet, but that which he conceives to be divine or supernatural is a source of the direst terror. This man Cassius must have; no respectable man could have been found who possessed equal audacity. In fact every conspiracy or vigilance committee has just such an instrument, whose function it is to do work which no decent man is willing to perform, but which must be done. When we observe that Casca was the first one that stabbed Cæsar, we know exactly where to place him. Cassius needs this man, and it is curious to note with what consummate tact he proceeds. Knowing the weak side of Casca's character to be his superstition, he brings all his force to bear upon this single point. There is only one result which can follow.

Thus far we are all admiration for the intellect of Cassius, but several things have transpired under his direction at which the rigidly moral man must shrug his shoulders. He has no doubt taken advantage of the weakness of Brutus and

Casca, and deceived them both; he has declared that to be truth which he himself could not have believed, especially to Casca; he has laid a most unrighteous snare for poor Brutus by writing him anonymous letters which the latter took to be calls from the people; finally, he designs the assassination of a human being, an act which can hardly be justified from any purely moral point of view. Further on in the play we shall find many other deeds of an equally doubtful nature. How, then, is Cassius to be understood? Shall we take the common statement, that it is a case of great intellect without any moral perceptions? But if we look at another side, we behold a character of the noblest stamp, of surpassing brightness. With what energy does he strive to restore the old Roman state—with what industry does he collect every fragment of opposition to the mighty Cæsar—with what readiness does he die for his country! To be sure, he knows the might of place and pelf, but he only uses them as instruments to his great end. There is only one clue to his conduct. His highest end was the State, and everything which came in conflict with this end had to be subordinated. It was a time of strife and revolution, the ancient landmarks of society were swept away, the prescribed limits of order obliterated. No man ever saw more clearly than Cassius the finitude, one-sidedness and inadequacy of the merely moral stand-point in such a period, and consequently he proceeded to disregard it entirely. Suppose he did deceive or assassinate a man, provided he thereby saved the State? In fact, what is war but lying, cheating, robbing, and killing, for one's country? And the man who can do these things most successfully and on the most gigantic scale is the hero, is the great general. To be sure, all this is done to our enemy; but that can be no justification; the moral obligation lies between fellow-men, and not fellow-countrymen. When Cassius no longer has this end in view, he is as moral as any other man—in fact, an exemplary character. His abstinence is especially contrasted with the debauchery of Antony; he is moderate in desires, meagre in shape, a great student and observer of men,—all of which point to a temperate and steady life. His chief characteristic, then, is the subordination of moral to political ends: he is the statesman, his thought

and activity find their limits in the State, his world is his country. His point of view is stated by himself:

In such a time as this it is not meet
That every nice offence should bear his comment.

His reasoning is: To be sure, Lucius Pella has taken bribes, but that offence can by no means be balanced against his services and abilities, or his influence; therefore let it pass, for we need the united efforts of all against the common enemy. A distinguished American officer once expressed this subordination of moral to political duties in the following toast: "My country—may she ever be right; but, right or wrong, my country." This is, perhaps, only the *feeling* of patriotism; but the insight of Cassius was deeper, for he comprehended *intellectually* that the right of the state is superior to any individual right of conscience, whenever these rights come in collision.

But the cyclüs of characters, in order to be complete, must have its moral representative. This is Brutus. The poet has treated this character with such evident delight, has thrown around it such a halo of virtue, that it seems to be the leading one of the play. The honor, sincerity and nobleness of the man, the purity of his motives, his unimpeachable integrity in a corrupt age, the perfect fulfilment of every duty of the citizen, are brought out in their most glowing colors; even his family relations are introduced to crown the moral beauty of his character. All the virtues of private life seem to centre in this man, and we heartily join in the encomium of Antony:

This was the noblest Roman of them all;
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world: This was a man.

But alack the day! he was called upon, or thought he was called upon, to act in times of revolution, when all the ancient prescribed landmarks were swept down, and when even the clearest and most logical head could scarcely find its way out of the confusion. Now what does this man, of the keenest sense of honor, of the most truthful nature, proceed to do? First, to desert, and then to assassinate, his dearest friend. His motive, he says, was the general welfare, but immediately

thereafter declares that Cæsar had as yet done nothing hostile to the public good. And so this contradiction runs through all his acts and sayings. It is evident that he had violated this fundamental principle of his nature, his profoundest intellectual conviction. As far as his insight goes, the act is wrong. Cassius can consistently do such a deed, for his stand-point is the State; and in its preservation, everything—men, property, and principles—are to be submerged. But poor Brutus! what is his next step? He tries to justify the deed. Listen to his soliloquy, for nothing can more completely show the inadequacy of the moral point of view, and it is besides a fine specimen of moral reasoning not unknown in our day:

It must be by his death: and for my part
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crowned;—
How that might change his nature, there's the question.

It would seem that he was not aware of the great change which had actually taken place in the Roman Constitution, and does not know that the formal coronation of Cæsar would produce no alteration in the real condition of things. This fatal lack of all political sagacity in the leader would destroy any party or any cause. To continue:

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder
And that craves wary walking. Crown him — That,
And then I grant we put a sting in him
That at his will he *may* do danger with.

Possibility is here made the basis of action. That all practical wisdom is based on directly the opposite principle needs hardly to be stated. Moreover, all crimes can easily be justified in this way, since a man has only to plead some indefinite possibility.

The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power; and, to speak truth of Cæsar,
I have not known when his affection swayed
More than his reason.

From this it would appear that Brutus thought that Cæsar was still a good man and unworthy of death. It was only what Cæsar might become, that can furnish any defence for the deed.

But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder
Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the topmost round
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks into the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend; so Cæsar may.
Then, lest he *may*, prevent.

Possibility is again announced as the basis of action. The logical nature of this category is not very difficult of comprehension. In the Possible the Real and the Unreal are not yet differentiated, therefore it cannot have any determination. But action is something determined, and since the Possible has no such element in itself, the subject alone can make the necessary determination. Everything is possible, and just as well impossible. Who is to determine? Only the individual, and he must also act on this determination. Thus subjectivity asserts its absolute validity, and this is what is meant by the subjective or moral point of view which in this play is represented by Brutus.

And since the quarrel
Will bear no color for the thing he is,

(what he now is, cannot justify our act—another declaration that Cæsar had as yet done nothing which merited death,)

Fashion [state] it thus : that what he is, augmented
Would run to these and these extremities;
And therefore think him as the serpent's egg,
Which hatched would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

If you cannot find a real crime, draw on your imagination and you are sure to discover one. It will be noticed that in the foregoing soliloquy no charge is made against any act of Cæsar's. And yet the world has generally held that it is not moral perversity which utters these declarations—nay, that it is moral greatness. What, then, is the matter? *Brutus is not able to subordinate the various spheres of moral duty when they come in conflict.* He recognizes them all, to be sure, but not in their true limitations. Hence when they collide with one another, he becomes a mass of confusion, strife, and contradiction. Herein lies his immeasurable inferiority to Cassius, who clearly comprehends these limitations and

acts upon them. It is intellectual weakness, the inability to rise out of merely moral considerations in political affairs. The trouble is with Brutus' head, not his heart. He intends to do the right thing, only he does not do it. He acts not so much in opposition to, as outside of, his real intellectual conviction; for mark! he is not at all inwardly convinced by his own specious reasonings. He gets beyond his intellectual sphere, is befogged, and lost. So after all we see that intellect is necessary to the highest moral action. We have had much talk of late concerning the cultivation of the intellect to the neglect of morality. But it seems that Shakespeare has here contrasted these two sides of human nature in the most effective manner, decidedly to the disadvantage of the latter. For Brutus is a man of intense moral susceptibility, yet of small mental calibre; the result is that his mistakes and (what is worse) his transgressions are appalling. Shakespeare has thus illustrated a truth which it will do no hurt to repeat now-a-days, that the content of a moral act can only be given by intelligence, and that the cultivation of intellect is in so far the cultivation of morality in its true sense. Hence our schools are our best, and indeed are fast becoming our only moral teachers. To be sure, submission does not always follow insight; men often know the right, but do it not: still we can hardly ascribe this to their knowing it, nor should we assert that they were better off if they had known it. For in the one case there is a possibility of their becoming good men; but if they have no comprehension of the good, it is impossible.

In ordinary times of civil repose, we should say of Brutus, what a noble citizen! No one could be more ready to fulfil his duties to his family, his fellow-men, and his country. But it must be recollected that these duties were the prescribed usages, customs, and beliefs, of his nation; they were given to him, transmitted from his ancestors. But when prescription no longer points out the way, such a man must fall, for he has no intellectual basis of action. Still the morality of mankind in general is prescriptive, and does not rest upon rational insight; they follow the footsteps of their fathers. Hence it is that most people think that Brutus is the real hero of the play, and that it is wrongly named. But this was

certainly not Shakespeare's design, for it was very easy to construct a drama in which Brutus should appear as triumphant, by having it terminate at the assassination of Cæsar with a grand flourish of daggers, frantic proclamations of liberty, and "sic semper tyrannis." Shakespeare, however, takes special pains not to do any such thing, but to show the triumph of Cæsar's thought in the destruction of the conspirators. Still Brutus remains the favorite character with the multitude, because they do not and cannot rise above his stand-point, and to-day he is often taken as the great prototype of all lovers of liberty.

The effect of intellectual weakness combined with strong moral impulses appears, then, to be the meaning of this character. It is amazing to observe its contradictions and utter want of steadiness of purpose; nor are they at all exaggerated by the poet. This man, who could assassinate his best friend for the public good, cannot, when a military leader, conscientiously levy contributions for his starving soldiers; "For," says he, "I can raise no money by vile means." That is, he would sacrifice that very cause for which he committed the greatest crime known to man, to a moral punctilio. This may be moral heroism, but it is colossal stupidity. Furthermore, in every instance in which Cassius and he differed about the course to be pursued, Brutus was in the wrong. He, out of moral scruples, saved Antony, against the advice of Cassius; this same Antony afterwards destroyed their army and with it their cause. Moreover, the battle of Philippi, the fatal termination of the conflict, was fought in disregard of the judgment of Cassius. And finally he dies with a contradiction upon his lips, for he says that Cato was a coward for committing suicide, and then declares that he will never be taken captive to Rome alive, and shortly afterwards falls upon his own sword. Perhaps, however, he came to the conclusion that his country needed his death, for he said in his celebrated speech, "I have the same dagger (which slew Cæsar) for myself when it shall please my country to need my death." This oft-quoted and favorite sentence seems to be usually regarded as expressing the very quintessence of moral sublimity and heroic self-sacrifice. But one naturally asks who is to be judge whether his country needs his death

—the country or himself? If the country, then he would be a criminal publicly condemned, and there would be no necessity for his dagger, since his country would furnish him both instrument and executioner free of charge. But if he was to be the judge himself, why did he commit such villainous acts that in his own opinion his country needed his death? All this was intentional no doubt on the part of Shakespeare, for it comports too well with the contradictory character of Brutus to admit of any other supposition. One imagines that if the old bard could have foreseen all the frothy vaporings and mock-sentimentality to which this innocent absurdity has given rise, he would still be laughing in his grave. Such is the *true* irony of the great poet, so much insisted on by some critics, which portrays the finitude of individuals, classes, even whole historical periods, so adequately that they themselves take delight in the picture.

This difference in character between Brutus and Cassius must lead to a collision, and accordingly we have the celebrated quarrel in the 4th Act. Here we see the respective stand-points of the two men fully exhibited; Brutus is haughty, insulting, and plumes himself upon his moral integrity, though it seems that he was ready to take and indeed asked for some of the money which Cassius had raised by "vile means"; Cassius, on the contrary, keeps restraining himself, though exasperated in the highest degree, and ultimately leads the way to reconciliation. No personal feelings can dim to his eye the great end which he has in view, nothing must be allowed to put it in jeopardy; hence the quarrel, which would otherwise doubtless have terminated their friendship, if not have ended in a personal encounter, is healed as speedily as possible. There is a mightier collision pending which hushes all lesser strifes.

A further contrast to Brutus is Antony. This loose reveller is true to his friend Cæsar and avenges him, but the rigid moralist abandons and slays him. Antony is, moreover, a man of pleasure, and acts from impulse; Brutus pretends to be a philosopher and to be guided by fixed principles. "I am no orator as Brutus is, but a plain, blunt man, that love my friend." Antony's highest end was personal devotion to one whom he loved; he in nowise comprehends the move-

ment of either Cassius or Cæsar. Thus both Antony and Brutus are quite on the same spiritual plane, and hence Antony can justly reproach Brutus for his faithless conduct with a cogency which the latter can by no means answer :

Witness the hole you made in Cæsar's heart
Crying *long live, hail Cæsar!*

Yet Antony does most ample justice to the motive of Brutus, and seems to place all worthiness of an action in the motive, —a point of view, it needs hardly be said, purely moral and subjective :

This was the noblest Roman of them all ;
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did what they did in envy of great Cæsar ;
He only in a general honest thought
And common good to all made one of them.

These lines are often quoted as Shakespeare's actual opinion of Brutus ; but they are spoken by Antony, to whom they appropriately belong, and to nobody else. It is by no means certain that Shakespeare's own views are to be found always in the utterances of his characters. The dramatic poet expresses his convictions in the action, in the collision, and, above all, in the catastrophe. Judging by this standard, we should most decidedly aver that the above lines did not express Shakespeare's personal opinion. Both Antony and Brutus, therefore, have quite the same intellectual standpoint, though differing much in their outward lives ; but the one was true to it, the other was not. Brutus ought to have acted as Antony, to be faithful to his deepest convictions, and to have remained friendly or at least indifferent to Cæsar. Cassius alone can *intellectually* slay Cæsar.

Such appears to be the general purport of this play. Much might be said upon its formal excellence—the poetic beauty, rhetorical finish, and unusual clearness of the language, making it a favorite with many who read nothing else of Shakespeare—the logical arrangement of the parts, the happy consecution of motives ; but all this we shall leave to our reader to follow up at his leisure. Some of Shakespeare's fairest gems of characterization are found in the minor personages of the play, as Portia, the absolute type of wifeness, and Lucius, the faithful slave ; but their basis is plain and needs not

to be specially developed. Moreover, the mediations employed are deserving of the most careful study on account of their truth and profundity, as when for example in the third act the Poet makes popular oratory the means by which the tide is turned against the conspirators, and thus assigns its place as one of the chief political instrumentalities in the ancient and modern world. Also those curious supernatural manifestations, as the cry of the soothsayer, "Beware the ides of March," the appearance of the ghost of Cæsar, the presence of a lion in the streets, the wrathful signs of the heavens, seem to demand some rational explanation as well as the strange anthropological phenomena, as the presentiments of Cæsar and Brutus, and the dreams of Calpurnia and Cinna the Poet. Here is a side which Shakespeare always elaborates in full, but which can be best treated in a separate paper. The object at present is to bring into prominence the ethical world of Shakespeare and its immense significance, for these same collisions are taking place to-day, and indeed their true solution constitutes the comprehension of and mastery over the practical world.

To recapitulate; there are three leading moments in the drama: 1. Cæsar in the consummation of his world-historical career, on the pinnacle of his power and glory; 2. The reaction of the State against him headed by Cassius; 3. The negation of this reaction, the restoration and absolute validity of the Cæsarean movement. Hence we see that Cæsar is the real hero, and that the piece is justly entitled "Julius Cæsar." We also see, I think, that the collision is between the World-Spirit and the Nation, and that in this struggle three typical characters participate, forming a complete cyclus of characterization. Cæsar represents the world-historical stand-point, Cassius the political, Brutus the moral. Cæsar perishes; the ancient national sentiment rises up for a moment and destroys the individual, for, being of flesh and blood, an assassin may rush upon him and stab him to the heart; but his thought is not thus doomed to perish. Next to him comes Cassius, whose great mistake was that he still had faith in his country; a pardonable error, if any, to mortals! He did not, and perhaps could not, rise above the purely political point of view; to him the State was the ulti-

mate ethical principle of the Universe. Hence he did not comprehend the world-historical movement represented by Cæsar, but collided with it and was destroyed. To me a painful, melancholy character; with all his greatness, devotion, and intelligent activity, still finite and short-sighted. The mistake of Brutus is that he had anything to do with the matter at all—that he took part, or at least a leading part, in this revolution. The collision lay wholly beyond his mental horizon; hence he represents nothing objective, is the bearer of no grand ethical principle, like Cæsar and Cassius. He presumed to lead when he was intellectually in total darkness, trusting alone to his own good intentions. We do not blame him because he was ignorant, but because he did not know that he was ignorant. Every rational being must at least comprehend its own limits, must know that it does not know. We may laud the motive but lament the deed; still man, as endowed with Reason and Universality, cannot run away from his act and hide himself behind his intention, but must take the inherent consequences of his deed in their total circumference.

Brutus is no doubt the sphinx of the play, and has given much trouble to critics on account of the contradictions of his character. He seems both moral and immoral—to be actuated by the noblest motives for the public good, yet can give no rational ground for his act. Indeed we are led to believe that his vanity was so swollen by the flattery of Cassius that it hurried him unconsciously beyond the pale of his convictions. Still Brutus was undoubtedly a good citizen, a good husband, and a good man. But any one of these three relations may come into conflict with the others; which, then, is to be followed? If a man has not subordinated these spheres into a system—which can only be done by Intelligence—he cannot tell what course to pursue. Sometimes he may follow one, sometimes another, for in his mind they all possess equal validity. Hence such a person can only be inconsistent, vacillating and contradictory in his actions; and such a person was Brutus—a good, moral man, who recognized all duties, but did not comprehend their limitations, and hence fell beneath their conflict.